

***Sends Letter to Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, and Majority Whip Clyburn Calling for \$25 Million Emergency Supplemental to Provide Relief to State AIDS Drug Assistance Programs***

**(Washington, DC)** Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) made the following statement on the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) funding crisis. Due to a federal funding shortfall, state budget cuts, and an increase in the number of individuals who rely on state ADAPs for HIV-related medications, nine states, including Florida, have had to create ADAP waiting lists and cut services. State ADAPs are funded through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, which was established in 1990 to help provide health care services to low-income individuals living with HIV/AIDS in the United States. It currently serves more than half a million people, many of whom are uninsured and the majority of whom are underinsured.

On September 22, Hastings sent a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, and Majority Whip James E. Clyburn calling on the House of Representatives to bring an emergency supplemental of \$25 million to the floor for a vote as soon as possible to provide relief to state ADAPs, and for Congress as a whole to take swift and meaningful action to ensure that low-income, uninsured, and underinsured people living with HIV/AIDS have reliable access to their lifesaving medications. **(Please find below and attached a copy of the letter.)**

“Our nation’s AIDS Drug Assistance Programs are experiencing a funding crisis. Thousands of our most vulnerable citizens are counting on Congress to ensure that they have access to the medications they need to stay alive.

“To make matters worse, the Census Bureau reports that the number of uninsured Americans rose sharply last year to an all-time high of 50.7 million due to the difficult economy. It is projected that tens of thousands more individuals will soon require the vital services that state ADAPs provide to low-income, uninsured, and underinsured individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

“This issue hits close to home. Currently, of the 3,214 individuals on ADAP waiting lists, Florida has 1,712. This is outrageous!

“Congress must increase its commitment to state ADAPs while continuing to fund other AIDS programs. This problem is not going away; we need a long-term solution until the Affordable Care Act takes full effect in 2014.

“I urge the House to bring an emergency supplemental of \$25 million to the floor for a vote as soon as possible to provide relief to state ADAPs.”

Congressman Hastings has been a longtime advocate for the HIV/AIDS community, having introduced a resolution to recognize the life and legacy of AIDS activist Pedro Zamora and legislation to increase access to voluntary screening for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STIs). In addition, Hastings continues to support robust funding for the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, including the HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act, the Minority HIV/AIDS Initiative, and the National AIDS Strategy.

**The text of Representative Hastings’ letter follows:**

September 22, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
House Majority Leader  
H-107, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James E. Clyburn  
House Majority Whip  
H-329, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, and Majority Whip Clyburn:

I write to bring to your attention an urgent matter that requires immediate consideration. Our nation's AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAPs) are experiencing a funding crisis. With the uninsured rate at a record high due to the difficult economy; a growing number of individuals living with HIV/AIDS who rely on state ADAPs for access to treatment and other services; stagnant federal funding; and state budget cuts; thousands of Americans are counting on Congress to adequately and appropriately fund state ADAPs and thereby ensure that they have reliable access to the medications they need to stay alive.

As you know, state ADAPs are funded through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, which was established in 1990 to help provide health care services to some of our nation's most vulnerable citizens. It currently serves more than half a million low-income people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States, many of whom are uninsured and the majority of whom are underinsured. However, due to a federal funding shortfall, state budget cuts, and an increase in the number of individuals who rely on state ADAPs for HIV-related medications, nine states, including Florida, have had to create ADAP waiting lists and cut services by reducing eligibility criteria, changing formularies, and closing enrollment.

Furthermore, many other states have established various cost containment measures, which include dropping current beneficiaries from their programs and removing mental health drugs and medications for co-occurring conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. This poses a significant challenge to people living with HIV/AIDS who rely on state ADAPs to access mental health drugs, as well as threatens adherence to their current regimens.

To make matters worse, according to recent data released by the Census Bureau, the number of uninsured Americans rose sharply last year to an all-time high of 50.7 million due to the difficult economy. It is projected that tens of thousands more individuals will soon require the vital services that state ADAPs provide. This issue hits close to home. Currently, of the 3,214 individuals on ADAP waiting lists, Florida has 1,712 of them. That is, 53 percent of the poorest people in our nation who are waiting for AIDS medications are living in one state.

This is outrageous, especially given that the actual number of individuals requiring access to care nationwide is much higher. The actual number of people not receiving care and ineligible for ADAPs is unknown. States that have reduced their eligibility requirements may have decreased their waiting lists, but states are not tracking how many individuals are now ineligible.

It is clear that Congress must do more and work together with states and communities to address this national crisis. While President Obama has provided \$25 million to states that have been hit hardest, this is simply not enough. Congress must increase its commitment to state ADAPs while continuing to fund other AIDS programs. This problem is not going away; we need a long-term solution to ensure that these individuals have access to the care they need until the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* takes full effect in 2014.

Madam Speaker, Majority Leader Hoyer, and Majority Whip Clyburn, it is my sincere hope that Congress will take swift and meaningful action to ensure that low-income, uninsured, and underinsured people living with AIDS have access to their lifesaving and sustaining medications. To that end, I urge you to bring an emergency supplemental of \$25 million to the floor for a vote as soon as possible before the General Election on November 2, 2010, to provide relief to state ADAPs. I appreciate your support and look forward to working together with you to pass this crucial legislation.

Sincerely,

Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

*Congressman Alcee L. Hastings is Vice Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, a senior member of the House Rules Committee, and Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.*

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